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ABSTRACT

Competencies recommended by speech communication and educational researchers, as well as communication specialists and teachers of various content areas are identified. Guidelines are presented for teachers, who should demonstrate competencies in sending and receiving messages that: (1) are used to obtain or give information; (2) express or respond to feelings; (3) speculate, theorize, or include fantasy; (4) serve to maintain and facilitate social interaction; and (5) seek to convince. (JD)

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Communication Competencies for Teachers:
A CAT Subcommittee Report

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Communication Competencies for Teachers:
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VIEWPOINT

In recent years, numerous "calls for" a focus on the oral communication competencies of teachers have emerged (e.g., Forster and Sloan, 1979; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1979; Rubin, 1985). Yet, many teacher education programs neither require courses in speech communication nor assess a teacher's communication skills (McCaleb, 1983). Perhaps this lack of assessment has resulted from the fact that a list of teacher communication competencies has not been readily available. To remedy this situation, the Speech Communication Association's Committee on Assessment and Testing appointed a subcommittee in 1983 -- the Subcommittee on Teacher Communication Competencies. After reviewing competencies recommended by speech communication and educational researchers, as well as those recommended by communication specialists and teachers of various content areas, the Subcommittee has identifed the following communication competencies.

The reader should note several important considerations concerning the competencies delineated:

1. Categories reflect a functional approach (consistent with other SCA documents) and specify some speaking and listening skills that are appropriate for five dominant functions of communication. For utilitarian purposes the focus is on the context of teachers in the classroom. However, many of these skills are also applicable to parent-teacher, teacher-teacher, and administrator-teacher interactions.
2. The subpoints of the category system are suggestive rather than exhaustive. In addition, while these skills are reasonable, no claim is made that they are empirically supported, and thus work toward empirical verification of these skills is urged and encouraged.

3. While it is important for teachers to possess the skills identified, it is equally important to know when to apply them. The communication principles supportive of such choices are likely to be a function of such variables as teaching task (e.g., interpersonal/task), subject matter emphasis (e.g., science/humanities), level of instruction (e.g., pre-school/graduate school), teacher experience (e.g., new/old), and instructional context (e.g., classroom/teacher-parent). Here also empirical work is needed to identify these important communication principles.

4. This taxonomy is not value-free. That is ,the preference for "reason-giving" over "power moves" is based on both effectiveness and value criteria. It is important, therefore, that the taxonomy be examined continuously and carefuly for cultural, sexual, racial, and ethnic biases.

COMPETENCIES

I. Informative Messages: Teachers should demonstrate competencies in sending and receiving informative messages (i.e., messages that are used to obtain or give information).

A. Send informative messages

1. Structure informative messages effectively by using devices such as initial partitions, transitions, internal summaries, and concluding summaries.

2. Amplify information effectively through the use of verbal and audio-visual supporting materials.

3. Ask effective questions to assess student understanding of information given in lectures.

4. Present information in an animated and interesting way.

B. Receive informative messages effectively

1. Identify the main point of informative messages.

2. Identify structural patterns and problems in informative messages.

3. Evaluate the adequacy of verbal and audio-visual supporting materials.

4. Formulate questions that probe for the informative contents of messages.

5. Differentiate between messages which are delivered in an animated and interesting manner and those which are not.

II. Affective Messages: Teachers should demonstrate competence in sending and receiving affective messages (i.e., messages that express or respond to feelings).

A. Send affective messages effectively.

1. Express positive and negative feelings about self to students.
2. Express positive and negative feelings about students to students.
3. Express opinions about classroom content, events, and real world occurrences.
4. Demonstrate interpersonal openness, warmth, and positive regard for students.

B. Receive affective messages effectively.

1. Recognize verbal and nonverbal cues concerning student feelings.
2. Invite students to express feelings.
3. Be non-judgmental in responding to student feelings.
4. Ask open-ended questions in response to student expressions of feelings.
5. If necessary, offer advice tactfully.

III. Imaginative Messages: Teachers should demonstrate competence in sending and receiving imaginative messages (i.e., messages that speculate, theorize, or include fantasy).

A. Send imaginative messages effectively.

1. Use vivid descriptive language.
2. Use expressive vocal and physical behavior when creating or recreating examples, stories, or message form exemplars.

B. Receive imaginative messages effectively.

1. Respond to imaginative messages enthusiastically.
2. Be nondirective when encouraging student creativity.

IV. Ritualistic Messages: Teachers should demonstrate competence in sending and receiving ritualistic messages (i.e., messages that serve to maintain and facilitate social interaction).

A. Send ritualistic messages effectively.

1. Demonstrate appropriate behavior in performing everyday speech acts such as greeting, turn-taking, leave taking).
2. Model appropriate social amenities in ordinary classroom interaction.
3. Demonstrate competence when participating in or role-playing interviews, conversations, problem solving groups, legislative groups, and public ceremonies.

B. Receive ritualistic messages effectively.

1. Recognize when students perform everyday speech acts appropriately.
2. Recognize appropriate and inappropriate performances of social amenities.
3. Recognize competence and incompetence when students participate in interviews, conversations, problem-solving groups, legislative groups, and public ceremonies.

V. Persuasive Messages: Teachers should demonstrate competence in sending and receiving persuasive messages (i.e., messages that seek to convince).

A. Send persuasive messages effectively.

1. Differentiate between fact and opinion.
2. Recognize audience factors which may encourage or constrain acceptance of ideas.
3. Offer sound reasons and evidence in support of ideas.
4. Recognize underlying assumptions in one's own arguments.
5. Demonstrate a preference for reason-giving over power moves when interacting with students.

B. Receive persuasive messages effectively.

1. Recognize own bias in responding to ideas.
2. Question the adequacy of reasons and evidence given.
3. Evaluate evidence and reasons presented.
4. Recognize underlying assumptions in arguments of others.

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